

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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P R 251810Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6081

INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE

AMCONSUL MILAN

AMCONSUL NAPLES

AMCONSUL GENOA

AMCONSUL PALERMO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJ: NERVOUSNESS WITHIN DC AND LIBERAL PARTIES AFTER ACCORD
WITH PCI

REF: ROME 11775

SUMMARY WEEKEND MEETINGS OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT (DC) DIRECTORATE AND THE LIBERAL (PLI) PARTY NATIONAL COUNCIL REVEALED CONSIDERABLE UNEASE WITHIN BOTH PARTIES FOLLOWING THE INTER-PARTY PROGRAM AGREEMENT. IN A BITTER SEVEN-HOUR MEETING, MANY DC LEADERS SHARPLY CRITICIZED A CONTROVERSIAL PROPOSAL (FAVORED BY THE PCI) TO POSTONE THIS FALL'S LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS TO NEXT SPRING. THE DIRECTORATE DOCUMENT SPECIFICALLY WARNS LOCAL DC LEADERS NOT TO INTERPRET THE PROGRAM ACCORD AS A GREEN LIGHT TO ENTER INTO SIMILAR PROGRAM UNDERSTANDINGS WITH THE PCI. THE UPCOMING DC NATIONAL COUNCIL (JULY 29-31) WILL UNDOUBTEDLY

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PROVIDE THE FORUM FOR A FULLER POLICY DEBATE. THE PROGRAM ACCORD HAS LEFT THE SMALL LIBERAL PARTY BADLY DIVIDED. HOWEVER, PLI SECRETARY ZANONE BEAT BACK A NO-CONFIDENCE VOTE REQUESTED BY THE MALAGODI CONSERVATIVE MINORITY, CAUSING THE LATTER GROUP TO RESIGN THEIR PARTY LEADERSHIP POSITIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE DC'S LENGTHY AND OFTEN ACRIMONIOUS MEETING OF THE PARTY'S DIRECTORATE ON JULY 23 REVEALED CONSIDERABLE DISCONTENT AND NERVOUSNESS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE PROGRAM ACCORD. THE SESSION HAD BEEN CONVENED TO DISCUSS THE DC'S POLICY TOWARD THE DECENTRALIZATION LEGISLATION. THE DEBATE, HOWEVER, CENTERED ON A CONTROVERSIAL PROPOSAL (SUPPORTED BY THE PCI) TO POSTONE THIS FALL'S LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS TO NEXT SPRING (REFTEL). THE PARTY HEAD FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT (SIGNORELLO) ARGUED THAT POSTPONEMENT WOULD ENHANCE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL STABILITY. THE PROBLEM, HE SAID, SHOULD BE EXAMINED "IN THE LIGHT OF THE COUNTRY'S REAL INTEREST."

2. A MAJORITY OF THOSE PRESENT, HOWEVER, SPOKE OUT STRONGLY AGAINST POSTPONEMENT AS NOT BEING IN THE INTEREST OF THE DC. THEY ASSERTED THAT A "MINI-TEST" IN NOVEMBER (WHICH WOULD INVOLVE 10 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL ELECTORATE) WOULD BE HIGHLY USEFUL TO TAKE THE PULSE OF THE ELECTORATE FOLLOWING THE PROGRAM ACCORD. DOROTEI AND FANFANI (CENTER AND CENTER-RIGHT) ARGUED THAT THE DC WOULD DO WELL IN AN ELECTORAL TEST AND SHOULD NOT MISS AN OPPORTUNITY OF BETTERING ITS POLITICAL POSITION VIS-A-VIS THE PCI. FORZE NUOVE (ANTI-COMMUNIST LEFT) AGREED, ADDING THAT THE DC ALWAYS COMES TO LIFE BEFORE ELECTIONS.

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IN STATING THAT ELECTIONS KEEP UP THE DC'S "POLEMIC SPIRIT," DONAT-CATTIN IMPLICITLY ARGUED THAT ELECTIONS WOULD PROVIDE THE BEST GUARANTEE AGAINST FURTHER DC-PCI ACCOMMODATION.

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P R 251810Z JUL 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6082
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE
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3. IN THE END, WITH ONLY GROUP LEADER PICCOLI OPENLY SUPPORTING SIGNORELLO'S PROPOSAL FOR POSTPONEMENT, THE DIRECTORATE AGREED TO DEFER THE MATTER FOR DECISION BY PARTY SECRETARY ZACCAGNINI "IN CLOSE COORDINATION" WITH THE DC PARLIAMENTARY GROUP HEADS, A FORMULA WHICH WILL PERMIT FURTHER DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM AT THE FORTHCOMING DC NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE FOR JULY 29 THROUGH 31.

4. THE DIRECTORATE MEETING ALSO PROVIDED EVIDENCE OF WIDESPREAD UNEASE THAT THE RECENTLY CONCLUDED SIX-PARTY PROGRAM ACCORD MIGHT BE MISINTERPRETED AT THE LOCAL, PROVINCIAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS AS A GREEN LIGHT TO INSTITUTE SIMILAR PROGRAM UNDERSTANDINGS. THE DIRECTORATE DOCUMENT, THEREFORE, CONSTITUTES A FIRM WARNING TO LOCAL DC LEADERS THAT THEY MUST "SCRUPULOUSLY" ADHERE TO THE PARTY'S POLICY LINE--"A LINE WHICH REAFFIRMS THE DIFFERENT AND DISTINCT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN THE MAJORITY AND THE OPPOSITION IN A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM."

5. AT SEPARATE SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS ON SUNDAY, PARTY LEADERS MORO AND PICCOLI CLEARLY ATTEMPTED TO PLACATE THOSE ELEMENTS IN THE DC WHO ARE TROUBLED BY THE PROGRAM ACCORD. BOTH LEADERS DEFENDED THE AGREEMENT AS HAVING BEEN NECESSARY IN A TIME OF EMERGENCY. HOWEVER, MORO SAID THE "POLITICAL FRAMEWORK" HAD BEEN LEFT INTACT AND THAT THE DC HAD NOT ENTERED "INTO POLITICAL COLLABORATION WITH THE PCI." PICCOLI WAS JUST AS FIRM IN DISMISSING THE NOTION OF PCI ENTRY INTO THE MAJORITY AS "DESTABILIZING" FOR THE COUNTRY.

6. THE SIGNING OF THE PROGRAM ACCORD PROVED TO BE EVEN MORE DIVISIVE WITHIN THE SMALL LIBERAL PARTY

WHICH CONCLUDED ITS NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING ON JULY 24. THE CONSERVATIVE, OLD-GUARD WING (HEADED BY HONORARY PRESIDENT MALAGODI AND PLI PRESIDENT BIGNARDI) HAD CHARGED THAT PLI SECRETARY ZANONE SHOULD HAVE TAKEN THE PARTY INTO THE OPPOSITION RATHER THAN SIGN AN AGREEMENT WITH THE PCI. ZANONE DEFENDED HIS CONDUCT BY SAYING THAT FAILURE TO DEAL WITH THE PCI WOULD HAVE BUT ISOLATED THE PLI IN A POSITION OF PASSIVE OBSERVATION FROM THE SIDELINES. IN A TENSE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, ZANONE'S POSITION WAS UPHELD 89 TO 68 WITH 4 ABSTENTIONS. AFTERWARDS, MALAGODI AND BIGNARDI, JOINED BY VICE PRESIDENT BONALDI AND VICE SECRETARY COMPASSO, RESIGNED THEIR POSITIONS IN THE PARTY LEADERSHIP.HOLMES

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